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Jean Baptiste Ducoigne, the Kaskaskias,
and the Limits of Thomas Jefferson's Friendship

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By the late summer of 1807 Thomas Jefferson felt increasingly anxious about the world in general and the Ohio Valley in particular. A war scare with Great Britain, highlighted by the outrageous *Chesapeake-Leopard* affair—a British warship had fired on an American warship in United States waters—led the president and others to fear a renewal of the British-Indian alliance that had devastated the West during the Revolution. With large factions of formidable tribes such as the Potawatomis and Kickapoos apparently eager to take up the hatchet, America's western settlements might soon be awash in blood.¹

The Kickapoos seemed particularly dangerous and uncontrollable, as they had fallen under the sway of Tenskwatawa, the Shawnee Prophet, who sought to unite all Indians against land cessions to the United States. Land purchases were the foundation of Jefferson's Indian policy. They fueled American expansion while covering the process in a veneer of legitimacy. It was thought that opposition to those "purchases" had to have a foreign source. The Indiana Territory's Governor William Henry Harrison reported to Secretary of War Henry Dearborn that the Prophet was "an engine set to work by the British." A frontier war seemed in the

¹For the incident, see Spencer C. Tucker and Frank T. Reuter, *Injured Honor: The Chesapeake-Leopard Affair, June 22, 1807* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1996). Both Jefferson and his secretary of war, Henry Dearborn, were so sure of the likelihood of war with Britain that they ordered the governors of the Northwest on a war footing and moved extra troops and rations to Detroit. On November 27, 1807, Dearborn went so far as to propose sending a spy into Canada to gauge the military forces at Montreal and Quebec. Dearborn to William Hull, July 30, 1807, Dearborn to William Henry Harrison, Sept. 17, 1807, Dearborn to Edward Tiffin, Sept. 17, 1807, and Dearborn to M. Saily, Nov. 27, 1807, all in Correspondence, RG 107.2.1, Records of the Office of the Secretary of War, 1791–1947, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

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offing. Jefferson saw himself as a benevolent "father" to the Indians, so the idea of their rebelling against the United States and allying with the hated British must have been doubly disconcerting.²

While Jefferson had spent considerable time analyzing Indians, like most Americans of his generation he understood little about them. Fond of Indians in an abstract, romanticized sense, he also saw them as impediments to American settlement. Their way of life was backward, Jefferson rationalized, and must succumb to the inevitable triumph of Anglo American civilization. In his view the nativist Prophet and his Kickapoo adherents were renegades against both the United States and the Enlightenment ideals that it was founded upon. Only Indians who gave up the *savage* way of life and accommodated themselves to the Americans could hope (or deserve) to survive. Jefferson must have wondered why that logic escaped so many Indians when others plainly saw the writing on the wall. If only, the president must have thought, those Indians could be as wise and accommodating as the Kaskaskias.

Part of the once-mighty Illinois Confederacy,³ the Kaskaskias had allied themselves with powerful outsiders since the seventeenth century. Once they encountered Father Claude Jean Allouez on Lake Superior in 1666, then Father Jacques Marquette in 1673, the Illinois became fast friends with New France. The Kaskaskias were particularly enthusiastic in their conversion to Catholicism. During the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Illinois warriors proved crucial in protecting France's lines of communication and trade in the Mississippi Valley from France's Indian enemies. When the Kaskaskias moved from the Illinois River down the Mississippi in 1700 (eventually to modern Kaskaskia, Illinois) the French went with them, continuing to rely on the Illinois as military allies. When New France sought to destroy the Fox Indians in the 1730s, the Illinois joined the attack on their old enemies.⁴

²Anthony F. C. Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians: The Tragic Fate of the First Americans* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), 317; Harrison to Dearborn, July 11, 1807, in Logan Esarey, ed., *Messages and Letters of William Henry Harrison* (New York: Arno Press, 1975), 1:223.

³The Illinois had also included at least the Peorias, Moingwenas, Cahokias, Tamaroas, and the Michigameas. Raymond E. Hauser, "The Illinois Indian Tribe: From Autonomy and Self-Sufficiency to Dependency and Depopulation," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 69 (1976): 127-38. Hauser argues that the Illinois more closely resembled a "tribe" rather than a "confederacy." The Kaskaskias were the largest remaining group by the eighteenth century, having absorbed the few remaining Illinois. At an August 1796 council in Vincennes, Ducoigne, as Illinois spokesman, described the Illinois as comprising only the Kaskaskias, Peorias, and Cahokias. Joseph Jablow, *Illinois, Kickapoo, and Potawatomi Indians* (New York: Garland, 1974), 334.

⁴Hauser, "Illinois Indian Tribe," 134-35; Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 72-75, 214. For Fox wars, see R. David Edmunds and Joseph L. Peyser, *The Fox Wars: The Mesquakie Challenge to New France* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 119-201. For first contact, see Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France, 1610-1791* (Cleveland: Burrows Brothers, 1899), 51:47.

Jean Baptiste Ducoigne⁹ had left Illinois, paddling down the Mississippi to Arkansas to live under the protection of the Quapaw Indians and the Spanish. They were finally granted their own lands on the White River in eastern Arkansas in 1777 after they had pleased Spanish authorities by plundering local British traders. But by 1777 Ducoigne's people wanted to go home to Illinois, and conditions there now seemed more favorable. Most rejoined the roughly two hundred Kaskaskias who had stayed in Illinois. They had probably returned by May, when Ducoigne's two-year-old son Jean was baptized.¹⁰

Despite their small numbers, the Kaskaskias took part in the American Revolution. Hoping to regain their foothold in Illinois, the Kaskaskias cast their lot with the rebels, as most of their traditional enemies sided with Britain. While too few to make a major impact on the battlefield, the Kaskaskias found other ways to aid the Americans. Ducoigne served as the Americans' emissary to the Wabash tribes in 1778 and supplied venison to the army of George Rogers Clark when he invaded the Illinois country. Clark also used Ducoigne for another diplomatic mission in the autumn of 1778: "The Chickasaw being at war, I wished to have some correspondence with them in order to learn their sentiments. I did not care to send to them, however, since this would appear too much like begging a peace as they call it." Instead, Clark sent Ducoigne, whom he "knew was strongly disposed in our favor." Clark admitted that, while politely received, Ducoigne's mission to the Chickasaws accomplished little. What the mission did demonstrate was Ducoigne's willingness to help the Americans. It also showed either Clark's deep trust in the chief or a lack of concern for his well being, as he knew that the Kaskaskias had long been at war with the powerful Chickasaws.¹¹

Clark scored impressive victories against the British, but his men were horribly outnumbered and vulnerable to the Indians of the Ohio Valley, most of whom sided with Britain. Kaskaskia warriors saved the American garrison at Fort Jefferson (near the juncture of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers)¹² when British-allied Indians besieged them in 1780. While too few to fight, the Kaskaskias hunted and scouted

⁹Historian Stanley Faye states that Ducoigne was probably about nineteen at this time, citing a Spanish authority who wrote in 1775 that Ducoigne was "Mozo como de 20 años" (a youth of about 20). However, that would have made him only twelve when he was declared the new chief in 1767. Faye, "Illinois Indians on the Lower Mississippi, 1771-1781," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 35 (1942): 61; Thomas de Acosta to Don Luis Unzaga y Amezaga, Aug. 29, 1775, Legajo 2357, Papeles Procedentes de Cuba, Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain.

¹⁰Faye, 61-70. For the baptism, see Faribault-Beauregard, 177.

¹¹Milo M. Quaife, ed., *The Capture of Old Vincennes: The Original Narratives of George Rogers Clark and of His Opponent Gov. Henry Hamilton* (Indianapolis: Bobbs, 1927), 107.

¹²Robert B. Roberts, *Encyclopedia of Historic Forts: The Military, Pioneer, and Trading Posts of the United States* (New York: Macmillan, 1988), 264, 313.

for the desperate Americans. "[T]hey are of singular service, as the provisions in store, are totally exhausted," wrote John Dodge, the Indian agent there. At the same time, Dodge noted, a lack of trade goods to supply the few pro-patriot Indians in the west might turn them toward the British.¹³ While Ducoigne's willingness to help the Americans at the risk of provoking neighboring tribes might seem odd or even impetuous, it actually continued a consistent Kaskaskia policy. For over a century, the Kaskaskias had taken pains to ally themselves with powerful foreigners who could protect them. The Americans simply replaced the French and Spanish in that model. For the dwindling Kaskaskias the major difference between the 1670s and the 1770s was their reluctance or inability to offer battle any more.

From the very early days of the Revolution, the hard feelings between Anglo-American colonists and displaced Indians intensified. Indians, in frontiersmen's eyes, became little more than demons. The Kaskaskias did not fit that mold. While many settlers may have considered all Indians to be enemies, more enlightened Americans could see some distinctions. For his day, no man was more enlightened than Virginia's governor, Thomas Jefferson.

Ducoigne traveled to Virginia in 1781, as either a scout or an emissary, to meet with General Lafayette.¹⁴ While there, he also paid a visit to Jefferson. Ducoigne had heard of the governor (probably from Clark) and had named his infant son Louis Jefferson. Jefferson had heard of Ducoigne as well, noting him as "an Indian Chief . . . whose rank, services, disposition and proposals are such as require attention from us and great respect." Ducoigne and his people seemed almost custom-built to strike a chord with Jefferson. They were friendly, interested in trade, and, like the future president, Francophilic. They were not the kind of Indians that Jefferson had learned to fear and hate; the kind that he called "merciless . . . savages" in the Declaration of Independence.¹⁵ In a word, they seemed civilized.

¹³In 1777 the Spanish authorities in Louisiana, for example, estimated that the Kaskaskias and Peorias combined could muster only one hundred warriors. "The British Regime in Wisconsin—1760–1800," in Thwaites, ed., *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1908), 18:368; Robert George to George Rogers Clark, July 31, 1780, in Katherine Wagner Seineke, *The George Rogers Clark Adventure in the Illinois* (New Orleans: Polyanthos, 1981), 448–49; Dodge to Thomas Jefferson, Aug. 1, 1780, in James Alton James, ed., *George Rogers Clark Papers, 1778–1781*, Collections of the Illinois State Historical Library, Vol. 8 (Springfield: Illinois State Historical Library, 1912), 437.

¹⁴William Shannon wrote to Clark that Ducoigne, along with a company of dragoons, had arrived "six or seven weeks ago." Shannon to Clark, May 21, 1781, in James, *George Rogers Clark Papers, 1778–1781*, 555. Arthur St. Clair mentioned Ducoigne's service with Lafayette in St. Clair to Henry Knox, May 1, 1790, in William Henry Smith, ed., *The St. Clair Papers: The Life and Public Services of Arthur St. Clair* (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke, 1882), 2:139.

¹⁵Jefferson to Robert Scot, May 30, 1781, in Julian P. Boyd, ed., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1952), 6:43; Wallace, 73. The Declaration states, in part, that George III "has endeavored to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers the merciless Indian savages, whose known rule of warfare is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes, & conditions." This passage remained unchanged through each draft of the Declaration. Boyd, *The Declaration of Independence: The Evolution of the Text*, ed. Gerard W. Gawalt (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1999), 70, 76.



The three American leaders who were the most sympathetic to the Kaskaskias were (left to right) President Thomas Jefferson, the Indian Territory's first governor, William Henry Harrison, and Secretary of War Henry Dearborn.

While the Illinois remained staunch French allies until 1763, maintaining the alliance with France exacerbated tensions with their native neighbors. Casualties mounted, and most of the Peorias removed west of the Mississippi River in the 1760s. Those factors, combined with disease, caused the Illinois population, once numbering perhaps ten thousand, to fall to about twenty-four hundred by the end of the French and Indian War. The Kaskaskias, easily the largest of the Illinois tribes remaining, counted less than eight hundred. The precipitous decline continued in the last decades of the century.⁵

A significant (if gradual) economic transition paralleled the Illinois' population decline. Like most tribes east of the Mississippi River, the precontact Illinois lived by a combination of women's swidden agriculture⁶ supplemented by men's subsistence hunting. When the Illinois began to participate in the European fur trade, they increasingly expanded their hunting for commercial purposes, which put additional pressure on game animals and made the Illinois more dependent on European trade goods—muskets, steel tools, and the like. As their numbers

⁵Hauser, "Illinois Indian Tribe," 134. For Peoria removal, see Hauser, "An Ethnohistory of the Illinois Indian Tribe, 1673–1832" (Ph.D. Diss., Northern Illinois University, 1973), 119. While disease was the primary killer, the Illinois tribes also sustained significant combat losses. Hauser, in a subsequent article, "The Fox Raid of 1752: Defensive Warfare and the Decline of the Illinois Indian Tribe," *Illinois Historical Journal* 86 (1993): 210–24, discusses one battle wherein the Illinois tribe lost 3 percent of its total population. For Illinois Indian population estimates, see Joseph Zitomersky, *French Americans—Native Americans in Eighteenth-Century French Colonial Louisiana* (Lund, Sweden: Lund University Press, 1994), 201, 321.

⁶In swidden, or slash-and-burn, agriculture, fields are cleared by slashing and burning the vegetation, with the ash helping to fertilize the soil. After a period of years soil fertility declines and the farmers move to a new area, repeating the process and allowing the old field to lie fallow and recover its vegetation and fertility. When ample land is available, such a cycle can be repeated indefinitely. James H. Howard, *Shawnee! The Ceremonialism of a Native Indian Tribe and Its Cultural Background* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1981), 48–49.

decreased, their ability to hold on to territory, and therefore potential farmland, diminished as well. Also, the formerly independent Illinois came to believe that they needed colonial approval even to legitimize their own chiefs. In 1767 Kaskaskia leaders met with the British Indian Commissary at Fort de Chartres to have him recognize their new chief, a young métis named Jean Baptiste Ducoigne.⁷

The son of René Ducoigne and Elisabeth Michel Rouensa, Ducoigne was born January 20, 1750, and baptized at Fort de Chartres two days later. His father was a French Canadian, captured by the Cherokees and later employed by the British as an interpreter. Ducoigne's Kaskaskia mother was the daughter of a Kaskaskia chief and descended from the famous seventeenth-century chief Rouensa, whose daughter Marie had been one of the earliest and most stalwart Catholic converts among the Illinois tribes. Baptized as Louis, the future chief apparently changed his name, probably at his pubertal vision quest, as was common among the Illinois tribes. The Illinois had traditionally practiced hereditary chieftainship, passing from father to son. Ducoigne was related to the Kaskaskia chiefs through his mother, not his father, and seems to have initially been thrust into the leadership role when the hereditary chief died an untimely death without a male heir. Of note, the chief had received a mortal stab wound from the Ottawa war chief Pontiac.⁸

As France vacated the Illinois country and the less hands-on British moved in, the Kaskaskias' enemies—the Potawatomis, Sauks, Foxes, and Kickapoos—saw a chance to renew their attacks, leaving the Illinois tribes particularly hard pressed. By 1774 about three hundred Kaskaskias (including eighty warriors) under chief

⁷Hauser, "Ethnohistory of the Illinois Indian Tribe," 69–72, 118. For British approval of Illinois chiefs, see *ibid.*, 288; Edward Cole to William Johnson, June 23, 1766, and Cole to George Croghan, July 3, 1767, both in Clarence Walworth Alvord and Clarence Edwin Carter, eds., *The New Regime, 1765–1767*, Collections of the Illinois State Historical Library, Vol. 11 (Springfield: Illinois State Historical Library, 1916), 321, 581.

⁸For Ducoigne's baptism, see Marthe Faribault-Beauregard, *La Population des Forts Français d'Amérique (XVIII^e Siècle)* (Montréal: Éditions Bergeron, 1984), 2:234. For Illinois name changes, see Hauser, "Ethnohistory of the Illinois Indian Tribe," 219–20. For Ducoigne's French Canadian father, adopted by the Cherokees and serving as an interpreter for the British, see Henry Hamilton to Frederick Haldimand, Oct. 7, 1778, in H. W. Beckwith, ed., *Collections of the Illinois State Historical Library, Volume I* (Springfield: H. W. Rokker, 1903), 351; Edward P. Hamilton, ed., *Adventure in the Wilderness: The American Journals of Louis Antoine de Bougainville, 1756–1760* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964), 89 (The author wishes to thank Norm Owens for identifying this title). Sieur Ducoigne may have been the "Ducoin, captain, killed," in July of 1758. *Ibid.*, 236. For the role played by Rouensa's daughter among the Illinois, see White, 72–75, 214. Pontiac's stabbing of the elder chief is mentioned by British Indian Commissary Edward Cole. Cole to Johnson, 321. One encounters many spellings for Jean Baptiste's name: De Coigne, Du Coin, Decouagne, Dequoney, Battist, Baptist, John, Jean, etc. The chief himself apparently never wrote his name, so I arbitrarily settled on Jean Baptiste Ducoigne.

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Ducoigne was formally introduced to the governor, and they smoked a peace pipe together—a move of deliberate diplomacy on Jefferson's part, for he did not normally smoke. An exchange of gifts (a medal from Jefferson, painted buffalo skins from Ducoigne) followed. Ducoigne spoke of his friendship toward the United States, and said that he spoke for the other Illinois tribes as well. For his part, Jefferson urged Ducoigne to avoid combat with the British unless they attacked him first, though he also left Ducoigne plenty of room to attack the Redcoats if he chose.¹⁶

Jefferson's speech also made two promises that would preview the Indian policy of his presidency. Apologizing for the stifled flow of trade goods to the Illinois country during wartime, the governor promised to open the trade again once peace was achieved. He further promised to send schoolmasters to educate Indian children. While he had been eager to leave Virginia a few days prior to the meeting, Ducoigne was no doubt guardedly pleased with his visit to the governor and the medal that he received. He probably agreed with Jefferson's statement: "We, like you, are Americans, born in the same land, and having the same interests."¹⁷

As if to highlight his agreement with those sentiments, Ducoigne performed one more task as he headed home from Virginia. In August he stopped at Fort Pitt, Pennsylvania, to carry dispatches back to Clark in the Illinois country. Colonel John Gibson sent an official letter with the chief announcing that Lafayette had trapped General Cornwallis at Yorktown, where the British general was forced to surrender later that same October (1781). Serving as a courier for the Americans had not proven lucrative, however, as Gibson observed that Ducoigne had "requested that I woud mention his poverty to you and desire you to give him some Cloaths." That September, Clark did even better, spending \$900 (in inflated Virginia script) on a rifle for "John Baptist the Indian Chief."¹⁸

¹⁶Jefferson's June speech to Ducoigne said, in part: "It is better for you not to join in this quarrel, unless the English have killed any of your warriors or done you any other injury. If they have, you have a right to go to war with them, and revenge the injury, and we have none to restrain you. Any free nation has a right to punish those who have done them an injury. I say the same, brother, as to the Indians who treat you ill. While I advise you, like an affectionate friend, to avoid unnecessary war, I do not assume the right of restraining you from punishing your enemies. If the English have injured you, as they have injured the French and Spaniards, do like them and join us in the war. General Clarke will receive you and show you the way to their towns. But if they have not injured you, it is better for you to lie still and be quiet." "Speech to Jean Baptiste Ducoigne," June 1781, in Boyd, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 6:61. See also Wallace, 73–74.

¹⁷"Speech to Jean Baptiste Ducoigne," 6:62. See also Wallace, 73.

¹⁸Gibson to Clark, Aug. 20, 1781, in James, *George Rogers Clark Papers, 1778–1781*, 590. Despite all of his service, Gibson did not have complete faith in Ducoigne. The letter also noted: "I have many things I woud wish to Communicate to you But am afraid this letter might fall into the hands of the enemy." See also Faye, 67–72. For Ducoigne's rifle, see "Clark's Account with Virginia, March 30, 1778–June 9, 1763," in James, ed., *George Rogers Clark Papers, 1781–1784*, Collections of the Illinois State Historical Library, Vol. 19 (Springfield: Illinois State Historical Library, 1926), 272.

At the negotiations for the Paris Treaty of Peace in 1783, the British ignored their Indian allies in order to secure peace. They refused to recognize tribal claims, instead accepting the sovereignty of the new United States over all lands east of the Mississippi River and south of Canada. Those boundaries were a legal fiction: Britain had never effectively controlled the trans-Appalachian West, and the Indians living there had not been conquered. While Americans now assumed the stance of outright owners of those western lands, in truth they had established no authority beyond their own settlements. It took a decade of bloody conflict and some humiliating defeats at the hands of Indians north of the Ohio River to disabuse Americans of their conquering pretensions. The Kaskaskias tried to avoid those conflicts, though they remained America's ally.

Ducoigne continued to help the United States. He served again as a courier who could be trusted to carry dispatches to American military officers such as Major John Francis Hamtramck at Vincennes. He also remained an informant who could be sure to tell the Americans when he noted the movements of anti-American war parties. Ducoigne's appreciation for Jefferson may have played a part in his decision to help the United States, but even more practical concerns loomed. Fighting against the United States would have meant allying with the Potawatomis, Kickapoos, and other tribes who still raided the Kaskaskias. Allying with those Indians would have traded traditional enemies for a new and potentially awesome one, the United States. The Kaskaskias aligned themselves with the United States, wagering that the Americans would prove more useful as allies and more terrible as enemies. For some time that wager was tested, as tribes opposed to the United States saw the pro-American and none-too-numerous Kaskaskias as a tempting target.¹⁹

The Kaskaskias missed out on the plunder and glory reaped by the confederacy of Northwest Indians in their stunning defeats of American generals Josiah Harmer and Arthur St. Clair in 1790 and 1791, respectively. Led by chiefs Blue Jacket of the Shawnees and Little Turtle of the Miamis, the confederation's warriors pummeled the Americans twice. The latter defeat of St. Clair cost the Americans more than 630 men killed—the United States Army's worst defeat ever at the hands of Indians.²⁰

¹⁹For Ducoigne as courier, see John Edgar to Hamtramck, Oct. 28, 1789, and John Rice Jones to Hamtramck, Oct. 29, 1789, both in Gayle Thornbrough, ed., *Outpost on the Wabash, 1787–1791*, Indiana Historical Society Publications, Vol. 19 (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1957), 197–203; Wallace, 227. For threats against Ducoigne because of his alliance with the United States, see Edgar to Hamtramck, 199.

²⁰For the wars in the Northwest, see Wiley Sword, *President Washington's Indian War: The Struggle for the Old Northwest, 1790–1795* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985). See also John Sugden's *Blue Jacket: Warrior of the Shawnees* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), which makes the case that the Shawnee war chief, and not the Miami Little Turtle, was actually the confederacy's most important war leader.

The Kaskaskias, meanwhile, had spent the post-Revolution years trying to solidify their ties to, and the protection by, the Americans, though not always with great results. Not everyone in the American government appreciated them. In May of 1790 St. Clair (the same St. Clair whose army the Northwestern Indians would crush in 1791) wrote Secretary of War Henry Knox with his appraisal of Ducoigne and his people: "Baptiste Du Coigne, whom you may remember with the Marquis de Lafayette, is the chief of the Kaskaskia nation, and settled in Kaskaskia. I have been plagued with a great many of his talks. The nation is very inconsiderable, and I do not think it necessary to trouble you with them at present. He himself is the greatest beggar I have met with among nations who are all beggars. He counts no little upon his having been with the American troops in Virginia, and so far he merits some countenance."²¹

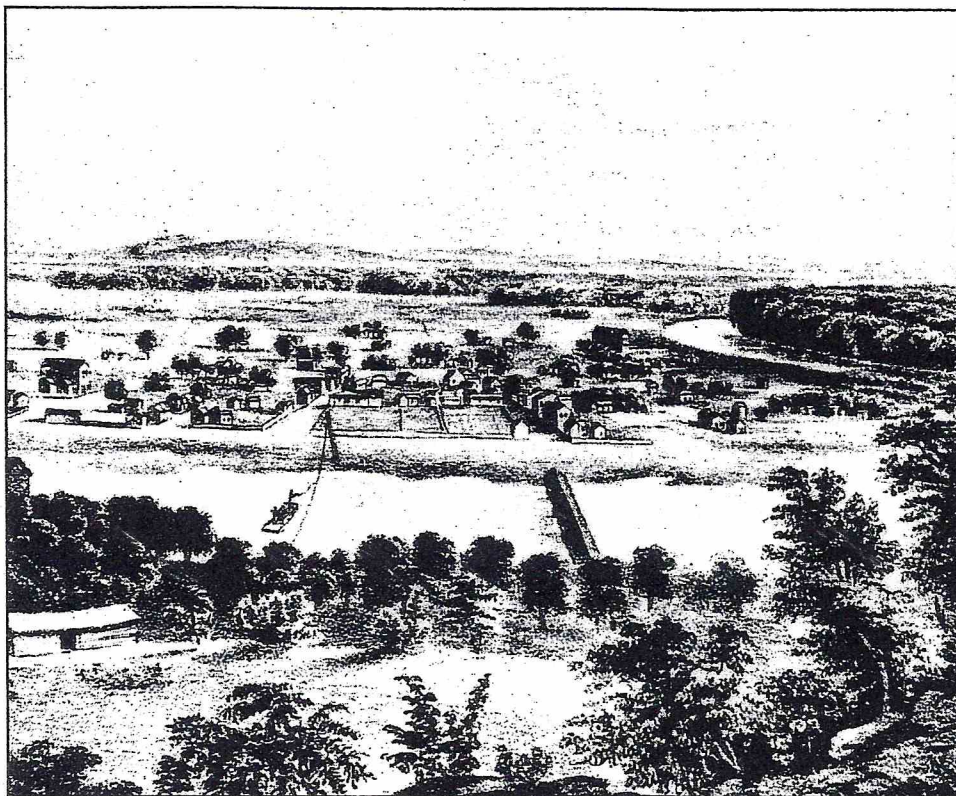
Given the crucial service the Kaskaskias rendered to Clark and his men during the Revolution, not to mention Ducoigne's continued efforts as a courier and scout for Hamtramck, St. Clair's words seem painfully short of memory and gratitude. Congress proved somewhat more appreciative. In an act of March 3, 1791, they secured to the Kaskaskias title to the 350 acres near the town of Kaskaskia that the tribe had occupied for years.²²

In September of 1792, while most other Ohio Valley Indians were at open war with the United States, the Kaskaskias, along with small pro-American factions of the Weas, Eel Rivers, Piankeshaws, Kickapoos, and Potawatomis, met in council with General Rufus Putnam at Fort Knox (Vincennes).²³ Nearly seven hundred Indians, including thirty-one chiefs, attended, and Ducoigne served as their spokesman: "tho he is Young, he is the best Speaker; and therefore we have chosen him to speak our Sentiments." For his constituents, Ducoigne stated that all the Indians wanted was to keep their lands, and suggested that the Americans withdraw from them. Neither France nor Spain had taken Indian lands away, and the United

²¹St. Clair to Knox, 2:139.

²²Grant Foreman, "Illinois and Her Indians," in *Papers in Illinois History and Transactions for the Year 1939* (Springfield: Illinois State Historical Society, 1940), 74.

²³Originally Putnam was appointed by Secretary of War Knox to negotiate with the anti-American warriors of the Ohio region at Fort Washington, Ohio. Given that the said warriors had murdered previous American emissaries just that June, however, Putnam's decision to negotiate with more amicable Indians was prudent, if not courageous. Sword, 212-13. As Putnam himself stated, the circumstances, "I trust will render my conduct excusable, at least, if not commendable." Putnam to Knox, Aug. 16, 1792, in *American State Papers, Class II, Indian Affairs* (Washington, D.C.: Gales and Seaton, 1833), 1:240. Edmunds's "'Nothing Has Been Effected': The Vincennes Treaty of 1792," *Indiana Magazine of History* 74 (1978): 23-35, covers the treaty in detail.



In the 1700s the Kaskaskias and their French allies moved from the Illinois River valley to the Mississippi River valley near modern-day Kaskaskia. Except for a brief period in the 1770s, the Kaskaskias remained in the vicinity until 1832.

States should follow suit. For himself, though, he added: "I fear you.—I am acquainted with your strength. Nobody can overset you; the great Spirit has ordered it so. I wish to live in peace with you always."²⁴

Ducoigne's statement on the one hand seems to undermine the Indians' position, taking away any leverage they might have used against Putnam. However, given Ducoigne's record of unwavering friendship for, and aid to, the United States, his fellow chiefs may have picked him for reasons in addition to his speaking prowess. The choice of the notoriously pro-American Ducoigne may in itself have been a signal that those chiefs, if not their belligerent brethren, sought peace. Further, an Eel River chief noted that Ducoigne was "wise, & acquainted with the United

²⁴Rowena Buell, ed., *The Memoirs of Rufus Putnam and Certain Official Papers and Correspondence* (Boston: Houghton, 1903), 341–44. At forty-two, Ducoigne would still have been considered youthful for a civil chief, though his unusually young age at ascension gave him far more leadership experience than most men his age. Sword, 217.

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States." Regardless, Putnam had little to offer in return. Ducoigne and the other chiefs marked a treaty of friendship with the United States, in which they accepted American sovereignty and agreed to return any white prisoners they held. They also promised to warn the United States if hostile Indians approached. The treaty guaranteed the assembled Indians the lands "to which they have a just claim" and stated that land purchases could take place only with Indian consent and "by a fair purchase and to their satisfaction." The Senate rejected the treaty, however, objecting to the latter statements.²⁵

When pro-American chiefs, Ducoigne among them, journeyed to Philadelphia²⁶ in 1793 to deliver speeches to President George Washington, they sought primarily to secure protection from the Kentuckians, who "are like mosquitos, and try to destroy the red men." It is interesting to note that in 1793 Ducoigne was not advocating selling land to the United States or assimilating to American ways. He simply wanted to be left alone. "Keep the Americans," he implored Washington, "on one side of the Ohio . . . and us on the other."²⁷

But the United States never seriously considered trying to keep American settlers out of the Ohio Valley. Instead, Washington and the Americans knew that the United States needed a military victory in order to bring the confederation of Northwestern Indians to the peace table. American hopes rested on a much better prepared and disciplined army under General "Mad" Anthony Wayne. Wayne did not disappoint, winning the tactically small but strategically crucial victory at Fallen Timbers in August of 1794. The Kaskaskias took no part in the battle, and Ducoigne, as he had in previous years, professed continued friendship to the Americans. He also provided them with information, even though the treaty requiring that he do

²⁵Buell, 346, 363-65.

²⁶Thomas Jefferson, then secretary of state, did not hesitate to utilize Ducoigne as a guide for André Michaux, whom Jefferson had tapped for a proposed expedition to explore the West. Jefferson's instructions to Michaux noted that he was to explore the Missouri River as a channel of communication to the Pacific: "To the neighborhood of this river, therefore, that is to say, to the town of Kaskaskia, the society will procure you a conveyance in company with the Indians of that town now in Philadelphia." Jefferson to Michaux, Jan. 1793, in A. P. Nasatir, ed., *Before Lewis and Clark: Documents Illustrating the History of the Missouri, 1785-1804* (St. Louis: St. Louis Historical Documents Foundation, 1952), 165.

²⁷"Speeches of John Baptist de Coigne, Chief of the Wabash and Illinois Indians, and other Indian Chiefs," in H. A. Washington, ed., *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson* (Washington, D.C.: Taylor & Maury, 1854), 8:176-78; Wallace, 176. Ducoigne was relatively accommodating to the United States, but he was not interested in martyrdom. Edmunds describes how he declined a request to journey on the Americans' behalf to a council of anti-American Indians on the Sandusky River. Those who did go, including the Potawatomi chief Gomo, were not killed, but were held hostage at the behest of British Indian Agent Alexander McKee until some Chippewas intervened for them, validating Ducoigne's concern. Edmunds, "Nothing Has Been Effectuated," 33-34.



CONSTANTIN F. VOLNEY

so had been rejected. Ducoigne confirmed to Wayne the presence of Wabash Indians and Canadians in the forces that had confronted him at Fallen Timbers.²⁸

Wayne's victory brought about treaty negotiations at Greenville, Ohio, in 1795. Apparently the Kaskaskias took little part in the Greenville Treaty negotiations, though Ducoigne may have made a speech there. The tribes that opposed the United States in the recent fighting had to cede three-quarters of what would become Ohio. The Kaskaskias, never having opposed the United States, were not required to part with anything. Wayne nevertheless included them in the agreement. They received a \$500 annuity while ceding no land of their own. By establishing both peace and, through annuities, an American power lever in tribal politics, the treaty would set the stage for the next two decades of United States-Indian relations in the Ohio Valley.²⁹

²⁸Wayne to Knox, Sept. 20, 1794, in Richard C. Knopf, ed., *Anthony Wayne, a Name in Arms: Soldier, Diplomat, Defender of Expansion Westward of a Nation* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1960), 357. Ducoigne attended when a delegation of Sacs and Foxes arrived for a peace council in Kaskaskia in May and June of 1794. The council does not appear to have accomplished much, though according to the military logbook, Ducoigne managed to receive two quarts of liquor at government expense. "The High Cost of Entertainment," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 35 (1942): 296.

²⁹For war in the Northwest, see Sword; David B. Stout, "The Piankashaw and Kaskaskia and the Treaty of Greene Ville," in *Piankashaw and Kaskaskia Indians* (New York: Garland, 1974), 360-63; "Treaty with the Wyandot, etc., 1795," in Charles J. Kappler, comp. and ed., *Indian Treaties, 1778-1883* (New York: Interland, 1972), 42. For long-term influence of the Greenville Treaty, see Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 114.

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Ducoigne's friendship with the United States extended beyond cooperating with civil and military officials. In *The Western Journals of Dr. George Hunter, 1796-1805*, Hunter describes how Ducoigne gave him both directions and advice for coping with the dry prairie during his 1796 journey through the Illinois country. Jefferson's friend Constantin F. Volney also visited the West, armed with a letter of introduction from Jefferson to his "good friend and brother" Ducoigne. Jefferson asked the chief to look after the Frenchman, and also stated his hope that Ducoigne's lands would "never . . . be disturbed." Apparently Ducoigne saw neither the letter nor Volney, as the Frenchman was too frightened by tales of drunken Indian attacks to travel west of Vincennes.³⁰

The Greenville Treaty also mentioned the Vincennes grant, a section of land around the town of Vincennes that the local Indians had allowed French colonists to use during the eighteenth century. While Ducoigne's address to Washington in 1793 had asked him to "not take from the French [settlers] the lands which we have given them," the Greenville Treaty reserved the Vincennes grant for the United States. In 1800 Vincennes became the capital of the newly formed Indiana Territory (initially comprising the future states of Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin). The chiefs who marked the Greenville Treaty in 1795 had acknowledged American ownership of the Vincennes tract, but the treaty was quite vague as to the exact size of the grant. Soon after the formation of the Indiana Territory, however, the new president, Thomas Jefferson, the new secretary of war, Henry Dearborn, and the territory's first governor, William Henry Harrison, took a keen interest in Vincennes's boundaries.³¹

All three men thought that America's Revolutionary ideals and national honor dictated that the United States avoid conquest on the Spanish model, and that Indians should receive fair and just treatment. At the same time, they were also ardent nationalists (quite common for men of the Revolutionary generation) and expansionists, and when fair treatment for the Indians clashed with the needs of expansion, expansion usually won out. Jefferson in particular seemed to convince himself that the growth of the United States would ultimately benefit Indians as well as Americans. He reasoned that Indian traditions could not be maintained in

³⁰John Francis McDermott, ed., *The Western Journals of Dr. George Hunter, 1796-1805* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1963), 27-28. See also Volney, *View of the Climate and Soil of the United States of America: To Which are Annexed Some Accounts of Florida, the French Colony on the Scioto, Certain Canadian Colonies, and the Savages or Natives* (London: J. Johnson, 1804), 393-97. For Jefferson's letter of introduction, see Gilbert Chinard, *Volney et l'Amérique d'Après des Documents Inédits et sa Correspondance avec Jefferson*, Johns Hopkins Studies in Romance Literatures and Languages, Vol. 1 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1923), 41.

³¹"Speeches of John Baptist de Coigne"; "Treaty with the Wyandot."

the face of the sweeping prairie fire that was American land hunger. "All that a humane, educated, and politically powerful white man could do in the social milieu of the time," writes Anthony F. C. Wallace, "was save as many brands as possible from the burning." The central contradiction to Jefferson's Indian policy, of course, was that while he tried to save men like Ducoigne, he himself was fanning the flames.³²

In June of 1802 Dearborn wrote to Harrison directing him to determine how large the local Indians—the Kickapoos and Piankeshaws—would allow the Vincennes tract to be. While local Indians believed that the cession comprised about eight thousand acres, Harrison, citing land claims (twice nullified by Congress) of the defunct Illinois and Wabash land companies, argued that the United States was entitled to almost one million acres. Securing the approval of local chiefs for that large cession would surely prove difficult. To aid the governor, Dearborn sent medals and \$1,500 in silver to be distributed to the chiefs at the pending council, scheduled for August 1802.³³

Solidifying American territorial holdings in the Ohio Valley was too important to leave any room for chance, though, so Harrison sought additional aid. He enlisted the Miami war chief Little Turtle, who had fought against the United States in the 1790s but now advocated accommodation (and was receiving a private annuity of \$150 from the United States). He also utilized Little Turtle's son-in-law, William Wells, a Kentuckian who had lived as an adopted Miami (even fighting against the United States for several years prior to 1794) and was now an Indian agent and interpreter for the government. To those relatively recent converts to pro-Americanism, Harrison added Ducoigne, who had never faltered in his support of the United States.³⁴

³²Wallace, 277. Early national attitudes toward Indians and expansion have fostered considerable debate and literature. For the standard interpretations, see *ibid.*; Reginald Horsman, *Expansion and American Indian Policy, 1783-1812* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1967); Bernard W. Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction: Jeffersonian Philanthropy and the American Indian* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1973); Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984).

³³Dearborn to Harrison, June 17, 1802, in Clarence Edwin Carter, ed., *Territorial Papers of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1939), 7:53-55; Dearborn to Daniel Vertmer, Aug. 6, 1802, in Correspondence, RG 107.2.1; Stewart Rafert, *The Miami Indians of Indiana: A Persistent People, 1654-1994* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1996), 66-68. In fact, as seen in John D. Barnhart and Dorothy L. Riker's *Indiana to 1816: The Colonial Period*, *The History of Indiana*, Vol. 1 (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau and Indiana Historical Society, 1971), 174-75, these purchases had never been recognized by Britain prior to the Revolution. See also Harrison to Dearborn, Feb. 19, 1802, Dearborn to Harrison, Feb. 23, 1802, and Harrison to Dearborn, Feb. 26, 1802, all in Esarey, 1:37-43, 46.

³⁴Jefferson to Dearborn, Aug. 12, 1802, in Carter, *Territorial Papers of the United States*, 7:68; Harvey Lewis Carter, *The Life and Times of Little Turtle: First Sagamore of the Wabash* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 39; Rafert, 38; Paul A. Hutton, "William Wells: Frontier Scout and Indian Agent," *Indiana Magazine of History* 74 (1978): 203.

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The preliminary treaty council of August went poorly at first, dragging into September, as most of the assembled tribes' leaders objected to the size of the cession and to cessions in general. They flatly stated that selling lands to the Americans angered the Great Spirit. Little Turtle, Wells, and Harrison cajoled the assembled chiefs to allow only four pro-American chiefs, Little Turtle and Richardville of the Miamis and Topenbee and Winamac of the St. Joseph (Michigan) Potawatomis (who had no real claim to the lands in question),³⁵ to represent them at a subsequent treaty council in June of 1803. That council proved heated, with threats flying and delegations storming out. Harrison refused to back down. Supported by Little Turtle and Ducoigne,³⁶ he also threatened to withhold treaty annuities unless the council went his way. In the end, Harrison got his interpretation of the cession, securing title to one million acres for the United States. As the cession was considered part of the original Greenville Treaty, the tribes involved received no additional annuities, except for several bushels of salt.³⁷

The Vincennes cession proved important for several reasons. It was Harrison's first Indian treaty, and it marked the beginning of a career in Indian land acquisition that in many ways remains singular. The cession, and the high-pressure tactics used to engineer it, demonstrated the acceleration of Jefferson's manifest Indian policy: to purchase as much Indian land along the Mississippi and Ohio rivers as possible in order to create an American bulwark against possible Spanish or French

³⁵For the relative location of the tribes involved, see Helen Hornbeck Tanner, ed., *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 40-41, 58-59, 93, 98-99.

³⁶From the surviving records, Ducoigne's support for the United States and peace was clear, though his argument for the cession seems tangential at best. In a speech from September 15, 1802, he stated: "Kickapoos—Potawatamies miamis—Listen to me—this is the sentiments of your younger Brothers Kas[kas]kias they disapprove of the conduct of their forefathers—They never acted as became wise men—consider your situation &c. not long since your creek[s] & Rivers were all flowing with your blood—It is by meddling with their quarrels that you are destroyed—look at the Sauks—they keep all their Land [in 1804 they would cede most of their holdings in Illinois]—they were allways neutral—Stay at home and take care of your wives and children Our fathers formerly smoked the pipe of peace it has been taken from us—I wish for peace." "Notes of Speeches at an Indian Council," Sept. 15, 1802, in Douglas E. Clanin, ed., *The Papers of William Henry Harrison, 1800-1815* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1993), 1:392.

³⁷"Negotiations at an Indian Council," Sept. 12-17, 1802, in *ibid.*, 1:380-85; Dorothy Burne Goebel, *William Henry Harrison: A Political Biography*, Indiana Historical Collections, Vol. 14 (Indianapolis: Historical Bureau of the Indiana Library and Historical Department, 1926), 104-5; Moses Dawson, *A Historical Narrative of the Civil and Military Services of Major-General William H. Harrison* (Cincinnati: Cincinnati Advertiser, 1824), 49-50; "Treaty with the Delawares, etc., 1803," in Kappler, 65; Horsman, *Expansion and American Indian Policy*, 143. For the size of the cession, see Charles C. Royce, comp., *Indian Land Cessions in the United States* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1900), 656-57, 662-63.

invasion from Louisiana. The treaty served as a model for future treaty negotiations with Indians. It also showed how Ducoigne and the Kaskaskias had fared in the previous decade. The continued raids by other tribes³⁸ and by white frontiersmen had so reduced the Kaskaskias that they could no longer even try to maintain their land holdings. They were completely dependent upon the United States for protection and willing to facilitate land sales to the government. Now it would be their turn to cede land.

The August 13, 1803, treaty with the Kaskaskias proved a coup for the United States. The Kaskaskias, estimated by Harrison to number perhaps thirty souls, signed away nearly eight million acres of southern Illinois. Harrison had noted the previous March that the Kaskaskias eagerly sought the protection of the United States, and the threat of their "extirpation by the Potawatomis"³⁹ served as a key incentive for them to do so. In the treaty, the United States promised to protect them from all enemies, as it would United States citizens, provided that the Kaskaskias did not make war on anyone. Their annuity doubled to \$1,000. Reflecting the civilizing goal, Ducoigne received a new house with a fenced-in field, and those predominantly Catholic Indians got funds for a church⁴⁰ and a salary for a priest for seven years. They got to keep 350 acres for themselves, though that was merely confirmation of their land grant by act of Congress in 1791. They could also pick a 1,280-acre reservation for themselves within the ceded lands.⁴¹

Article IV of the treaty spelled out the relinquishing of their independence, as the United States reserved the right to divide the annuity among the several Kaskaskia families. Besides reducing Ducoigne's prestige by not allowing him to

³⁸Wallace, 224–25. See Jefferson's letter to Harrison in which he bluntly directs him to acquire Indian lands by any means necessary, including threats and running chiefs into bankruptcy. Jefferson to Harrison, Feb. 27, 1803, in Esarey, 1:71–73. While Jefferson had professed, and would continue to profess, friendship for Ducoigne, in his instructions to Harrison he did not hesitate to suggest sending a spy to the chief's village to determine his willingness to cede lands. Wallace, 223–25. For Indian attacks on the Kaskaskias—note that the Sauks attacked again in 1801–1802—see Donald Jackson, ed., *Black Hawk: An Autobiography* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 50.

³⁹Harrison to Dearborn, Mar. 3, 1803, in Esarey, 1:78. The quote refers to the western Potawatomis, led by war chiefs like Main Poc and Turkey Foot, rather than the St. Joseph River or Chicago-area Potawatomis, who had strong ties to the United States. For differences among the Potawatomis, see Edmunds, *The Potawatomis: Keepers of the Fire* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1978), 156. Part of the difficulty in gauging the Kaskaskias' numbers derives from sources not distinguishing between the Kaskaskias and their Cahokia and Peoria cousins. Estimates from this time period usually range from fifteen to thirty, but do not add whether this counts merely warriors, or women and children also. Jablow, 338, 341; Goebel, 105–6. The cession originally comprised the southern Illinois country from the Ohio to the watersheds of the Kaskaskia and Wabash rivers. It was considerably extended in 1818. Royce, 664–67, 692–93.

⁴⁰Actually getting the church took some additional effort, though. Almost seven years after the treaty the Kaskaskias still had not received the promised funds. Ninian Edwards to William Eustis, Feb. 24, 1810, in Carter, *Territorial Papers of the United States*, 16:75.

⁴¹"Treaty with the Kaskaskia, 1803," in Kappler, 67–68.

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The 1803 treaty between the United States and the Kaskaskias resulted in the cession of nearly eight million acres to the United States. Among the benefits to the Kaskaskias was a new house (shown above) for Ducoigne.

distribute goods as a chief would normally do, dividing the annuities by family would save the United States money. Six Kaskaskias (about one fifth of their total number, by Harrison's reckoning) marked the treaty.⁴² Jefferson and Harrison hoped that Ducoigne and the Kaskaskias, having relinquished the vast bulk of their lands and independence, would inspire other chiefs to make large cessions to the United States.⁴³

Jefferson's enthusiasm for the cession represented a key shift in his thinking regarding Indian lands. In 1796 he had written that he hoped the Kaskaskias would not be "disturbed" on their lands. In February of 1803 he wrote a private letter to Harrison explicitly calling for the rapid purchase of Indian lands in the Mississippi

⁴²Ibid. On June 27, 1804, Dearborn wrote to Harrison of Jefferson's suggestion of giving annuities to individual families, so that when a family died out, the cost to the United States would decrease. Dearborn to Harrison, June 27, 1804, in Esarey, 1:100-1.

⁴³Dearborn to Harrison, June 27, 1804, and Harrison to Dearborn, 1804, both in Esarey, 1:100, 115. "The Kaskaskias were, in fact, a decimated and impotent tribe: indeed there was considerable doubt as to their rightful claim to all the land they had ceded." Horsman, *Expansion and American Indian Policy*, 146. This might partially explain why tribes like the Potawatomis, and later the Kickapoos, sought vengeance against the Kaskaskias.

Valley by virtually any means necessary, including running chiefs into debt to encourage them to sell land. He did so to strengthen the American hold on the valley in the case of a rumored transfer of the Louisiana country from relatively weak Spain to aggressive Napoleonic France. Prior to the Louisiana Purchase, that seemed pragmatic, and might simply serve as yet another example of President Jefferson's policies contradicting Citizen Jefferson's rhetoric. But one might also see that reversal as another example of Jefferson's soothing words masking his more blunt aims.⁴⁴

The Kaskaskias continued to suffer attacks from other tribes in the region, and their cooperation with the United States only increased the animus felt by their neighbors. That resulted in part from the great size of the cession made by such a small group. Other tribes may also have been jealous of what they would have considered the special treatment that the Kaskaskias received. Jefferson believed that "every reasonable accommodation" should be afforded his old friend Ducoigne, and had Dearborn order Harrison to "satisfy every reasonable request he may make on the score of living; he certainly is entitled to attention, and ought to be enabled to live decently, and in a due degree of independence. You will please to draw on this Department, for such sums as may be necessary for furnishing him with suitable supplies for his family use, from time to time." Ducoigne's prosperity, Jefferson hoped, would encourage other chiefs to follow his example and sell lands.⁴⁵

Harrison reported favorably on Ducoigne's attempted transformation to the Anglo American-style small farmer that Jefferson always hoped Indians would become. Indeed, by that time the Kaskaskias' economy bore little resemblance to their precontact one. The tribe was involved mostly in sedentary, Anglo American-style agriculture, as reflected in the goods that they wanted. Ducoigne requested that the additional annuity from the 1803 cession be used to purchase groceries and some furniture for his home, with the balance going toward horses and agricultural equipment for the tribe. Supplying annuities in the form of livestock and farming tools had always been a pet project for Jefferson. The chief had also noted that previously the Kaskaskias had used their surplus annuities to buy alcohol. "Ducoigne himself is a decent, sensible, gentlemanly man, by no means addicted to drink, and possessing a very strong inclination to live like a white man," Harrison asserted. Doing so was Ducoigne's primary motivation for the sale, and, the governor continued, it was money well spent by the government. Other Indians were beginning to consider such sales in order to live like Ducoigne. Somewhat

⁴⁴Jefferson to Harrison, Feb. 27, 1803. In *Thomas Jefferson: Writings* (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 1984), 1,117, compiler Merrill D. Peterson refers to the letter as "Machiavellian Benevolence and the Indians."

⁴⁵Dearborn to Harrison, June 27, 1804, 1:100-1.

⁴⁶Harrison to Jefferson, Feb. 27, 1803.
Edward C. Taylor, "The young fellow"
⁴⁷Edmund M. O'Sullivan, "The British trade"
⁴⁸John R. Sweeney, "The British trade"
⁴⁹Ducoigne to Harrison, June 27, 1804.

inconsistently, however, Harrison noted that Ducoigne's friendship with the United States "has gained him the hatred of all the other chiefs," and reiterated that the United States should provide for the "happiness" and "safety" of the chief.⁴⁶

The safety and happiness of the Kaskaskias came under assault from many quarters. In the winter of 1804-1805, warriors of the western Potawatomis (who, unlike their northern and eastern cousins, were fiercely anti-American) raided the Kaskaskias, taking prisoners. Writing to Dearborn in November of 1805, Harrison opined that the United States needed to pass a law to save the Kaskaskias from local whites as well. "Designing persons are in the habit of getting them in debt and then threatening them with a suit unless they prevail upon me to assume payment." Several times circumstances forced Harrison himself to pay debts for Ducoigne. One wonders if Jefferson's infamous instructions to run the Indians into debt and dependence came to Harrison's mind as he penned those words.⁴⁷

Ducoigne supposedly bragged that his people had never shed the blood of a white man.⁴⁸ Yet he had not forgotten the Illinois warrior tradition, nor did he oppose war in principle. While his tribe clearly depended on the United States for protection, Ducoigne was not always the pacifist that his "father" in Washington wanted him to be. Despite his rather weak negotiating position, the chief did occasionally try to use the diplomacy of force for the Kaskaskias' benefit. In March of 1805 Ducoigne dictated a letter to John Lalime, the translator at Fort Dearborn, to be sent to the Potawatomis chief Gomo, near modern Peoria, Illinois. In a neat diplomatic two-step, Ducoigne suggested that the Potawatomis cease raiding the Kaskaskias and instead join them in a huge coalition of tribes to carry war to the Osage nation, "Which are very Bad Indians," in what became Missouri. With realistic humility, Ducoigne closed noting that his own nation was as "Small . . . [as] a Child," and not worth noticing, but that it behooved all the northern and Wabash Indians to destroy the Osages. As an addendum, Ducoigne requested that the Potawatomis Saugeenawk bring his wife, a Kaskaskia, and several other Kaskaskia women living with the Potawatomis (perhaps from the 1804-1805 raid) for a friendly visit.⁴⁹

The letter displays an interesting, calculated attempt by Ducoigne. His people stood no chance in an open war against the Potawatomis, and he also knew that the western Potawatomis had long gone to war against the Osages for honor and

⁴⁶Harrison to Dearborn, 1804, 114-15; Wallace, 300. Interestingly British Indian Commissary Edward Cole had made nearly the same comment about Ducoigne in 1767, noting him as "a fine young fellow not Debauched with Liquors." Cole to Croghan, 581.

⁴⁷Edmunds, *The Potawatomis*, 156-57, 164; Harrison to Dearborn, May 29, 1805, in Esarey, 1:176.

⁴⁸John Reynolds, *The Pioneer History of Illinois*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Fergus, 1887), 23. If Ducoigne did say this, he may have meant Americans, rather than all whites, as his own band had roughed up British traders while in Arkansas.

⁴⁹Ducoigne to Lalime, Mar. 2, 1805, in Carter, *Territorial Papers of the United States*, 13:103-4.

spoils. If Ducoigne could channel the aggressions of the Potawatomis and other powerful nations away from his vulnerable people and against the roundly disliked Osages, so much the better for the Kaskaskias. That ploy put the United States government in an awkward position, however. In times when the United States was at peace, Jefferson, blind to the cultural needs of warrior societies, tried to discourage intertribal warfare, but only through admonitions. American forces would not intervene militarily "except in the case of any hostile intentions against the remnant of the Kaskaskias, whom we are, in good faith, bound to protect."⁵⁰ Perhaps Ducoigne, when formulating his war letter, had predicted this reaction as well.

The great war that Ducoigne proposed never materialized. Instead, Harrison and the Louisiana Territory's Governor James Wilkinson called a peace council for October of 1805, bringing together most of the tribes at war with the Osages. The governors delivered a stern and eerily prescient message to the assembled chiefs, in which they warned that if the Indians continued to war against each other, "at Some future day," when the benevolent Jefferson was no more, the Americans might follow their example and carry war to the weakened tribes. Then, "they may overpower You by their Numbers & Sweep You from the face of the earth." While those harbingers of doom seem directed more at the Sacs, Kickapoos, and Osages as the primary belligerents, they obviously made an impression on Ducoigne. While the next day he did refer to the Osages as "our Strange brethren whom You have lately claimed as Children," the overriding theme of his speech was one of docility and acquiescence. Jefferson's "children" would now honor the peace. "[W]e Should Never be found unmindful of our promises—let us Show our father, that we are Sensible of the propriety of his advices . . . Then will we prove to the U.S. that We are desirous to live in peace among ourselves & follow the advices of our Great Father the President."⁵¹

While clever, Ducoigne's anti-Osage letter failed to erase centuries of poor relations with his neighbors. Trouble arose between the Kaskaskias and the much larger Kickapoos in March of 1807. Ducoigne's own brother-in-law, Gabriel, was murdered (apparently by the Kickapoos) on the Massac road a few miles from Kaskaskia. The body had been scalped, mutilated, and robbed. That might have

⁵⁰Dearborn to James Wilkinson, May 25, 1805, in *ibid.*, 13:133.

⁵¹"Journal of the Treaty Negotiations with the Osage, et al.," Oct. 14 and Oct. 15, 1805, in *Clanin*, 2:362, 373–74. Interestingly, the United States government did an about face regarding the Great Osages. In 1808 Louisiana Territorial Governor Meriwether Lewis feared that the Great Osages were combining with the Spanish to attack American settlers, and proposed that militia be raised and friendly Indians organized to smite them. Jefferson not only agreed, but also suggested providing logistical support for Indians who wanted to attack the Osages. Other tribes received the idea coolly, however, and the great war failed to materialize, as did the Spanish-Osage plot. Wallace, 268–69.

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been encouraged by resentment from the 1803 cession, as the Kickapoos lived on some of the land that the Kaskaskias ceded, or from the jealousy toward gifts the United States seemed to bestow upon Ducoigne. It could also have reflected the growing Kickapoo attachment to the militant Shawnee Prophet and his brother Tecumseh, both of whom adamantly opposed selling land to the United States. When told to behave only defensively, as he had agreed not to make war on other tribes, Ducoigne answered with bitter sarcasm: "Yes When I meet an Indian I must stand until he shoots me down, and then make a defence, and thus lose my life and the lives of my people. I have had ample protection promised to me by the United States and yet the officers [of the local militia] do not interest themselves in my behalf. No escort can be obtained to bring in my dead people and they even doubt their authority to rescue me from an attack, under these circumstances I ought at least to be placed on a footing with my enemies."⁵²

It appeared that the Kickapoos intended to wipe out the Kaskaskias, and Harrison deplored the idea of the United States reneging on its "solemn obligation" to protect them. He told Ducoigne to move his people into the town of Kaskaskia, and ordered the local militia to protect them. He then wrote to the Kickapoos and firmly stated that the United States would tolerate no wars against its dependents. Dearborn agreed—the Kaskaskias must receive the same protection as American citizens. That decision potentially carried far greater implications in 1807 than it would have previously. Anglo American relations had seen considerable friction for some time, and later that year the United States came to the brink of war with Great Britain.⁵³ It proved to be a tense time for Indian affairs on the frontier. Many Indians, like the Kickapoos, opposed American land purchases and seemed naturally inclined to ally with Britain. Ignoring the pleas of Ducoigne's small and rather unpopular tribe might have been easy, even prudent. Yet even when the war fever peaked, the key figures in formulating Indian policy in the Ohio Valley—Jefferson, Dearborn, and Harrison—never faltered. The Kaskaskias continued to receive protection.

The Kaskaskias merited the protection of the United States not just on the technical grounds that they had signed a treaty, but on more important symbolic grounds as well. As much as the Kaskaskias now needed the protection of the Americans, the Americans needed to protect the Kaskaskias because they represented the Jeffersonian ideal. They had given up much of their own culture

⁵²Wallace, 300; Michael Jones [register of the land office in Kaskaskia] to Harrison, May 4, 1807, in Esarey, 1:211–12.

⁵³Harrison to Dearborn, Nov. 29, 1805, Harrison to Pierre Menard, May 18, 1807, and Harrison to Kickapoos and Kaskaskias, May 19, 1807, all in Esarey, 1:176, 213–15; Dearborn to Harrison, June 20, 1807, in Carter, *Territorial Papers of the United States*, 7:461–62. While alleged British agitation of the Indians was a part of the war scare, it resulted most directly from the *Chesapeake-Leopard* affair of June 22, 1807. Few Americans doubted that a war with Britain would mean a war with her Indian allies, however, and tension remained high on the frontier for months afterward. Horsman, *The Causes of the War of 1812* (New York: Octagon Books, 1972), 159.

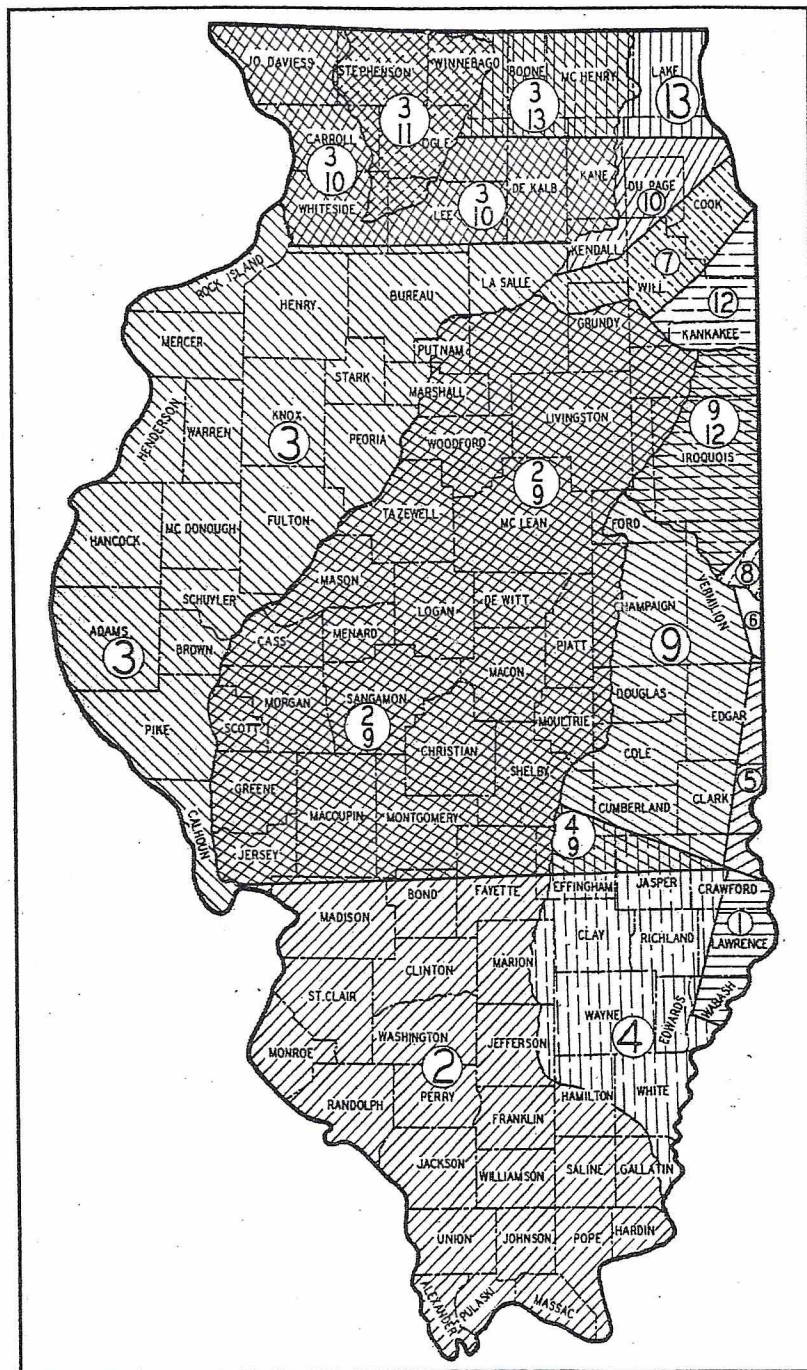
and adopted much of the whites'. In the precontact period the Kaskaskias and the other Illinois tribes had practiced self-sufficient swidden agriculture and subsistence hunting. Those practices gradually gave way to commercial hunting—a by-product of the fur trade that helped depopulate game animals and increase Indians' dependence on manufactured goods—and more sedentary farming and animal husbandry.⁵⁴ By the time of Jefferson's presidency, most Kaskaskias were the small yeomen farmers and occasional supplemental hunters that Jefferson wanted all Americans to be. Though they probably had few options, they allowed themselves to be swallowed up by the advancing American empire, and by doing so were incorporated into it.

Jefferson and Harrison could enjoy taking care of Ducoigne and his people because it allowed them to feel that they truly were benevolent and just in dealing with Indians. The Kaskaskias largely fit the profile of what Jefferson thought Indians *should* be. They seemed noble, loyal, and doomed. They could inspire and aid Americans without getting in the way of the distinctly Anglo American empire that Jefferson envisioned. Jefferson could protect the Kaskaskias at little or no risk, because they posed no cultural or physical threat to his plans. Embracing the Shawnee Prophet or other Indians who held dreams of remaining independent of Anglo American society would have proven far more difficult for the president.⁵⁵

The Kickapoos never did annihilate the Kaskaskias, but Ducoigne's people remained vulnerable to their neighbors, Indian and white. There were momentous changes for the Indian policy of the Ohio Valley in 1809. A new president, James Madison, assumed office, bringing a new secretary of war, William Eustis. Madison was in many ways Jefferson's protégé, but he lacked Jefferson's interest in Indian affairs. Soon distracted by international tensions resulting from the Napoleonic Wars in Europe and American efforts to take West Florida from Spain, Madison paid relatively little attention to Ohio Valley affairs. Further, in 1809, Illinois country

⁵⁴Hauser, "Ethnohistory of the Illinois Indian Tribe," 118, discusses the changing Illinois economy. The really interesting question, for which no data appears to exist, is whether men became farmers, as in other tribes during this period, or if the Kaskaskia women maintained their traditional horticultural role.

⁵⁵This portion, and in many ways the piece itself, was inspired by Wallace's *Jefferson and the Indians*, especially the introduction, concerning Jefferson's admiration for the doomed but eloquent Mingo warrior and orator, Chief Logan.



Indian Cessions in Illinois

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|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 1. June 7, 1803 | 8. October 2, 1818 |
| 2. August 13, 1803 | 9. July 30, 1819 |
| 3. November 3, 1804 | 10. July 29, 1829 |
| 4. December 30, 1805 | 11. September 15, 1832 |
| 5. September 30, 1809 | 12. October 20, 1832 |
| 6. June 4, 1816 | 13. September 26, 1833 |
| 7. August 24, 1816 | |

politicians, for reasons not involving Indian affairs, secured the separation of Illinois from the Indiana Territory. Ducoigne and the Kaskaskias had suddenly lost, in Jefferson, Dearborn, and Harrison, the three American leaders most sympathetic to them. With Eustis and Madison preoccupied and the Illinois Territory's Governor Ninian Edwards an admitted novice in Indian affairs, the Kaskaskias could not count on support from powerful American patrons.⁵⁶

The 1809 change of Indian affairs administrators in the Northwest could not have come at a worse time. The increasingly militant nativist movement of Tecumseh and the Prophet denied Americans' right to purchase any Indian lands without the consent of all Indians—a claim that American officials rejected outright. The Shawnee brothers' stance against American expansion naturally pushed them closer to British Canada (though that alliance was not sealed until 1810). The Prophet had instigated witch-hunts amongst the Delawares in 1806, and the witches (all of whom were pro-American) had been executed on his order. That news must have been disquieting for Ducoigne. The Kickapoos and the western Potawatomis, who had long warred against the Kaskaskias, were particularly influenced by the Prophet's anti-American views. Increasingly prowar sentiment in Congress also caused unrest on the frontier, as an invasion of Canada (which would force Indians to choose sides) would almost surely follow an American declaration of war.⁵⁷

Still, those matters were well beyond the control of the Kaskaskias, and they simply had to respond to events as they occurred. In July of 1809 Edwards reported to Secretary of State Robert Smith that Ducoigne still complained not only of the 1807 murder of his brother-in-law by the Kickapoos, but also of their theft of thirty Kaskaskia horses. "I believe no doubt exists of the truth of his charges and he demands the protection promised by treaty with the United States." Edwards also noted that Ducoigne strongly protested that the residents of Kaskaskia sold liquor to the tribe, though Edwards saw nothing illegal in that and stated that he would lock up any publicly drunk Indians. According to Edwards, Ducoigne seemed "well pleased" with that policy.⁵⁸

⁵⁶Eustis to Harrison, Mar. 7, 1811, in Carter, *Territorial Papers of the United States*, 8:113–14; Goebel, 116–17. The political squabbles leading to the separation included debates over where the Indiana territorial capital should be, as well as whether or not slavery should extend north of the Ohio River. Many Illinoisans also favored slavery, and they fled Indiana in a panic when it became clear that Harrison and the proslavery clique had fallen from political favor. Ibid., 78–86. For Edwards as a novice, see Edwards to Eustis, Feb. 24, 1810.

⁵⁷The Potawatomis liked the anti-American message, though were still largely influenced by their own warrior-prophet-chief, Main Poc, who did not agree with Tenskwatawa on all issues. Edmunds, *The Potawatomis*, 156–57. For Indians as allies, see Colin G. Calloway, *Crown and Calumet: British-Indian Relations, 1783–1815* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 71–76. For 1810 as the crucial year in the British-Indian alliance, see Sugden, *Tecumseh: A Life* (New York: Holt, 1998), 187.

⁵⁸Edwards to Smith, July 13, 1809, in Carter, *Territorial Papers of the United States*, 16:51–52. In this respect, Edwards differed significantly from Harrison, who, though also unsuccessful, acknowledged Americans' partial responsibility for the alcohol problem, and took some steps to limit the alcohol trade to the Indians. Harrison to Dearborn, July 15, 1801, in Esarey, 1:25–31.

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Edwards's February 24, 1810, letter to Eustis marks Ducoigne's last appearance in official government correspondence. Edwards forwarded Ducoigne's complaint that his people had never received the funds to build the church promised to them in their 1803 treaty. Edwards concurred, and added his own complaint that he had no gifts to give to visiting chiefs.⁵⁹

Ducoigne does appear once more in the historical record. The Kaskaskia mission's burial records show that on April 6, 1811, Jean Baptiste Ducoigne, "chef des Sauvages," was laid to rest. Among those attending were his two sons, Louis Jefferson and Baptiste. The local militia also attended "sous les armes" (under arms), indicating that the chief received military honors at his funeral.⁶⁰ Beginning in December of 1813, documents refer to "Lewis [Louis Jefferson] Decoigne" as the chief of the Kaskaskias. Symbolic of the often shoddy treatment he received from American officials, Ducoigne's passing was not officially noted until years later. In the meantime, Louis Jefferson assumed his hereditary chieftainship at a dangerous point in his tribe's history.⁶¹

The United States declared war on Great Britain in the summer of 1812, months after the Northwest had exploded into open warfare between anti-American nativists and United States settlers. The Kaskaskias wisely avoided any active role in the fighting. As they had since the Revolution, however, they continued to provide intelligence to American officials regarding the hostile intentions of their Indian neighbors, as when Kaskaskias visiting the Louisiana Territory returned with a

⁵⁹Edwards to Eustis, Feb. 24, 1810. Another letter from Edwards to Eustis mentions the chief of the Kaskaskias being absent from the village, but does not name the chief. Edwards to Eustis, May 20, 1812, in Ninian W. Edwards, *History of Illinois, from 1778 to 1833; and Life and Times of Ninian Edwards* (Springfield: Illinois State Journal, 1870), 322.

⁶⁰Faribault-Beauregard, 204. It appears that Ducoigne had two sons and at least three daughters, one of whom died at four months of age in 1788. Absolute clarity, given the tendency for the Illinois to change their birth names at puberty, is elusive, but Ducoigne may have had another wife as well, which was acceptable custom among the Illinois. *Ibid.*, 177.

⁶¹For reference to "Lewis Decoigne the chief of the Kaskaskia Indians," see "An Act Prohibiting the trading with Indians &c.," Dec. 8, 1813, in Francis S. Philbrick, ed., *The Laws of Illinois Territory, 1809-1818*, Collections of the Illinois State Historical Library, Vol. 25 (Springfield: Illinois State Historical Library, 1950), 89-90. In a footnote in "Ethnohistory of the Illinois Indian Tribe," 288, Hauser cites a "'Proclamation of Protection of Kaskaskia Indians,' July 7, 1817," in the Chicago Historical Society's Gunther Collection, which features a manuscript addition on its back, wherein Edwards notes Ducoigne's death and declares that he has appointed Louis Jefferson Ducoigne the new principal chief of the tribe. This is a curious document, as the documents cited above clearly point out, and the dearth of mention in subsequent correspondence supports, that the elder Ducoigne was long dead by 1817 anyway. Perhaps Edwards just wanted to make the transfer of power sound more official, paralleling, as Hauser suggests, the outsiders' legitimacy given to the elder Ducoigne's chieftainship by the British in 1767.

report of anti-American agitation by Cherokees there. But it was no longer safe for the Kaskaskias to serve as field scouts or emissaries. In fact, the usually unsympathetic Edwards eventually felt compelled to confine the Kaskaskias in the town of Kaskaskia once more. Fearing for their safety, he would not even allow them to hunt, feeding them instead from public funds.⁶²

The open Indian war in the Illinois Territory highlighted the need to protect the Kaskaskias, not only from native enemies, but from indiscriminate American ones as well. Fortunately for the Kaskaskias, the Illinois legislators finally took pity on them and did pass two laws to protect them. "An Act Prohibiting the trading with Indians &c.," passed on December 8, 1813, sought to guard against liquor traders taking the goods that the Kaskaskias now depended on. The law made it a crime to exchange whiskey or other alcohol for the Kaskaskias' guns, clothes, cooking utensils, or farming implements. Violations could bring a \$20 fine. The law also took pains to say that it was not intended "to restrain any person from trading with Lewis Decoigne the chief of the Kaskaskia Indians for any article that he may Deem necessary in behalf of said tribe," or to weaken the governor's ability to distribute presents.⁶³

The second act, "An Act concerning the Kaskaskia Indians," approved December 22, 1814, increased the territory's powers to punish offenders because: "a former law of this Legislature has been found insufficient to prevent evil disposed persons from selling and giving intoxicating drinks to the Kaskaskia Indians or from cheating and defrauding the said indians out of their property by pretended or real purchases and whereas the former practice is productive of disorder, and other pernicious consequences and the latter a violation of moral Justice and good policy." Therefore, in addition to the fines, the new law specified that white offenders had to pay fines within thirty days, and that Negro or mulatto offenders would be whipped fifteen lashes for the first offense and thirty more for each additional one. The governor and his subagents also gained the right to sue or issue warrants against the law's transgressors.⁶⁴

The war settled few of the conflicts that brought it on, but it did, with the death of Tecumseh and the destruction of his Red Stick Creek allies in the South, crack large-scale militant resistance to American settlement east of the Mississippi River. The tribes who had gambled on a British victory now sued for peace with the

⁶²Edwards to Eustis, July 21, 1812, and Edwards to John Armstrong, Apr. 12, 1813, both in Carter, *Territorial Papers of the United States*, 16:244-47, 312-16.

⁶³"An Act Prohibiting the trading with Indians &c.," 89-90.

⁶⁴"An Act Concerning the Kaskaskia Indians," Dec. 22, 1814, in Philbrick, 154-55. The provision about Negroes and mulattos being whipped rather than fined reflects the relatively high number of slaves and indentured servants in Illinois who presumably would not have had the means to pay fines. The law further stipulated that such Negroes and mulattos could avoid the whipping if someone paid the fine for them.

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Americans, touching off a new round of land cessions to the United States. Though they had remained loyal to the United States, the Illinois Indians concluded yet another treaty with the United States a few years later.

The 1818 treaty with the Peoria and other tribes secured to the United States title to the large strip of Illinois between the Kaskaskia cession of 1803 and the Sac and Fox cessions of 1804–1805. Interestingly, the Peorias, previously described as either extinct or as having but one warrior remaining, were now deemed fit to transfer title to lands that they had not controlled since the early eighteenth century. Such dealings were the norm in post-War of 1812 America, as landholding Indians east of the Mississippi came to be seen more as debris to be removed rather than forces to be reckoned with. Kickapoos actually occupied much of the cession, and some of them remained defiant toward the United States, but they could pose only a small and increasingly isolated threat to white settlement. Louis Jefferson Ducoigne marked the treaty for the Kaskaskias.⁶⁵

In a sense, the 1818 cession did not actually harm the Peorias or the Kaskaskias, as neither tribe had tried to exercise claim over the cession for decades, and between them they received \$2,000 worth of merchandise and an additional \$300 annuity for ten years. For several years after the war they did reap the fruits of their allegiance to the United States. While accounts as to the size of the tribe in those years vary from thirty to sixty people, they lived relatively well for post-war Northwestern Indians. In his 1819 narrative, Englishman Richard Lee Mason visited Kaskaskia, where he met the "Indian king" of the Kaskaskias, and the king's daughter, who spoke fluent French. He described the "king," presumably Louis Jefferson, as gentlemanly and conversant in French and English. Mason further noted that both the king and his daughter practiced Catholicism. "This Indian king owns 2,000 acres of the American bottom. Part he rents out to advantage, and part he cultivates. He lives well and might live elegantly."⁶⁶

⁶⁵According to Hauser, "Illinois Indian Tribe," 134–35, at some point in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century what remained of the Peorias and the other Illinois tribes had for practical purposes merged with the Kaskaskias. By examining the map on page 131, one sees that this was one of several redundant treaties the government conducted to secure absolute title to Illinois lands. While certainly self-serving and pragmatic from the government's point of view, the treaty could also be construed as a bonus for the Peorias and Kaskaskias by paying them for title to lands they had no hope of controlling anyway, not unlike their inclusion in the Greenville Treaty of 1795. "Treaty with the Peoria, etc., 1818," in Kappler, 165–66. For occupation of the cession, see Tanner, 140.

⁶⁶Neither Ducoigne nor Louis Jefferson ever signed their names to treaties, which implies that they may have been illiterate, but like many other frontier dwellers of their generation, they may well have been fluent in several spoken languages. For quotes and the estimation of thirty remaining Kaskaskias, see "Kaskaskia in 1819," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 41 (1948): 185–86. For estimates that there were about sixty Kaskaskias remaining, see Jay Monaghan, ed., "From England to Illinois in 1821: The Journal of William Hall," *ibid.* 39 (1946): 220–21.